CORMORANT CHANNEL MARINE PROVINCIAL PARK

PURPOSE STATEMENT AND ZONING PLAN

March 2003

Approved by:

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Date: Mar. 2003

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Purpose Statement and Zoning Plan

Primary Role
The **primary** role of Cormorant Channel Marine Park is to protect a significant example of a fast water productive marine ecosystem. The swift currents, cold upwelling water, rocky islets, kelp beds and location at the interface of two major bodies of water combine to make this area a particularly rich and diverse marine environment. The park has ecologically significant and unique assemblages of benthic and pelagic invertebrates including sea anemones, urchins, sponges, worms, and hydroids. It protects several rare species, including the northern abalone, pomegranate aeolid, and raspberry hydroid. The park provides nesting habitat and is a migration stop and resting area for seabirds, including red-necked phalaropes, marbled murrelets, auklets, petrels, shearwaters, albatross, and oystercatchers. Marine mammal species found in Cormorant Channel Marine Park are representative of the Queen Charlotte and Johnstone straits, and may include sea otters, northern sea lions, killer whales, humpback whales, gray whales, Pacific white-sided dolphins, Dall's porpoises, harbour porpoises, river otters and harbour seals. In addition, the park serves as habitat for sockeye, pink and chum salmon, halibut, and has a very diverse and abundant population of rockfish.

Secondary Role
The **secondary** role is to provide a marine recreation experience in a popular tourism destination area. Cormorant Channel Marine Park comprises the eastern portion of Pearse Island, the Plumper Islands and several smaller islets on both sides of Weynton Passage, at the junction of Queen Charlotte Strait and Johnstone Strait. The park's central location in Johnstone Strait for boaters, kayakers, fishers, and whale watchers enroute to Robson Bight and Broughton Archipelago from Telegraph Cove contributes to the park's role recreationally. In addition, the scuba diving is outstanding and well known in British Columbia. The park is undeveloped, with no facilities provided but wilderness camping is possible at two sites on Pearse Island.

Tertiary Role
The **tertiary** role is to protect representative examples of British Columbia's natural diversity. The park adds significantly to the representation of the Queen Charlotte Strait Ecosection and its upland and marine ecosystems, which are both under represented in the protected areas system.

Management Issues

Known Management Issue	Response
Lack of knowledge and public awareness of cultural and natural values	➢ Undertake cultural inventory of the area in conjunction with First Nations. ➢ Encourage research of marine organisms, especially the monitoring of rare species populations. ➢ Increase off-site interpretation coupled with other protected areas in the vicinity (i.e. Broughton Archipelago and Robson Bight).
Commercial fishing of federally managed	➢ Assess impacts and work with DFO on their rockfish

species (salmon and groundfish) occurs in the park – intensity of use is moderate to high (especially around Stubbs Island) which could impact recreational and natural values	management strategy to ensure impacts are mitigated. ➢ Encourage DFO to continue area closures of urchin fishery for undisturbed research.
Impact of recreational activities on the marine species (especially rare ones)	➢ Liaise with whale watching and dive community to ensure impacts are minimized.

Zoning

Special Feature Zone – covers the entire park (743.5 hectares) given the outstanding marine values. The objective of this zone is to protect and present significant natural or cultural features, resources, or processes because of their special character, fragility and heritage values.

Conservation

Representation - ecosection	☒	Cormorant Channel Marine Park is the 2nd largest contributor (with 27.4%) out of only 5 protected areas to the representation of the Queen Charlotte Strait *Terrestrial* Ecosection (QCT) – which has only 3.8% protected provincially. God's Pocket Marine is the largest contributor (61.5% of overall protected area representation of this ecosection). It also contributes 6.7% to the overall protected areas representation of the Queen Charlotte Strait *Marine* Ecosection. It is one of only 4 protected areas that contribute to protecting this ecosection, which is under represented at 3.3%. Broughton Archipelago is the largest contributor (66.2%).
- biogeoclimatic subzone/variant	☒	Contributes minimally (0.18%) to the representation of CWHvm1, which has only 7% of its area protected
Special Feature	☒	Fast water marine ecosystems, diversity of marine species, endangered species
Rare/Endangered Values	☒	*Red-listed species:* marbled murrelet, sea otter, northern sea lion, killer whale (both the northeast Pacific resident population and the west coast transient population). Two *red-listed* marine invertebrates – pomegranate aolid (*Cuthona punicea*) and raspberry hydroid (*Corymorpha sp.*) that depend on the rocky habitat and cold upwelling water. COSEWIC-listed threatened northern abalone. *Blue-listed species*: red-necked phalarope, humpback whale, gray whale, and harbour porpoise. *Yellow-listed species of conservation concern (S4):* black oystercatcher, river otter, Dall's porpoise, and sockeye salmon.
Scientific/Research Opportunities	☒	Marine mammal research, rare marine species, fast-water marine ecosystem

Recreation

Representation		
backcountry	☐	Not Applicable
destination	☒	Diving, fishing, kayaking, whale watching
travel corridor	☒	Safe moorage for transiting vessels. Inside Passage route, kayaking route from Telegraph Cove to north shore of Hanson Island

local recreation	☒	Diving, fishing
Special Opportunities	☒	Excellent and well-known dive site
Education/Interpretation Opportunities	☒	Offsite interpretation of marine values

Cultural Heritage

Representation	☐	Values unknown
Special Feature	☐	Possibly one archaeological site

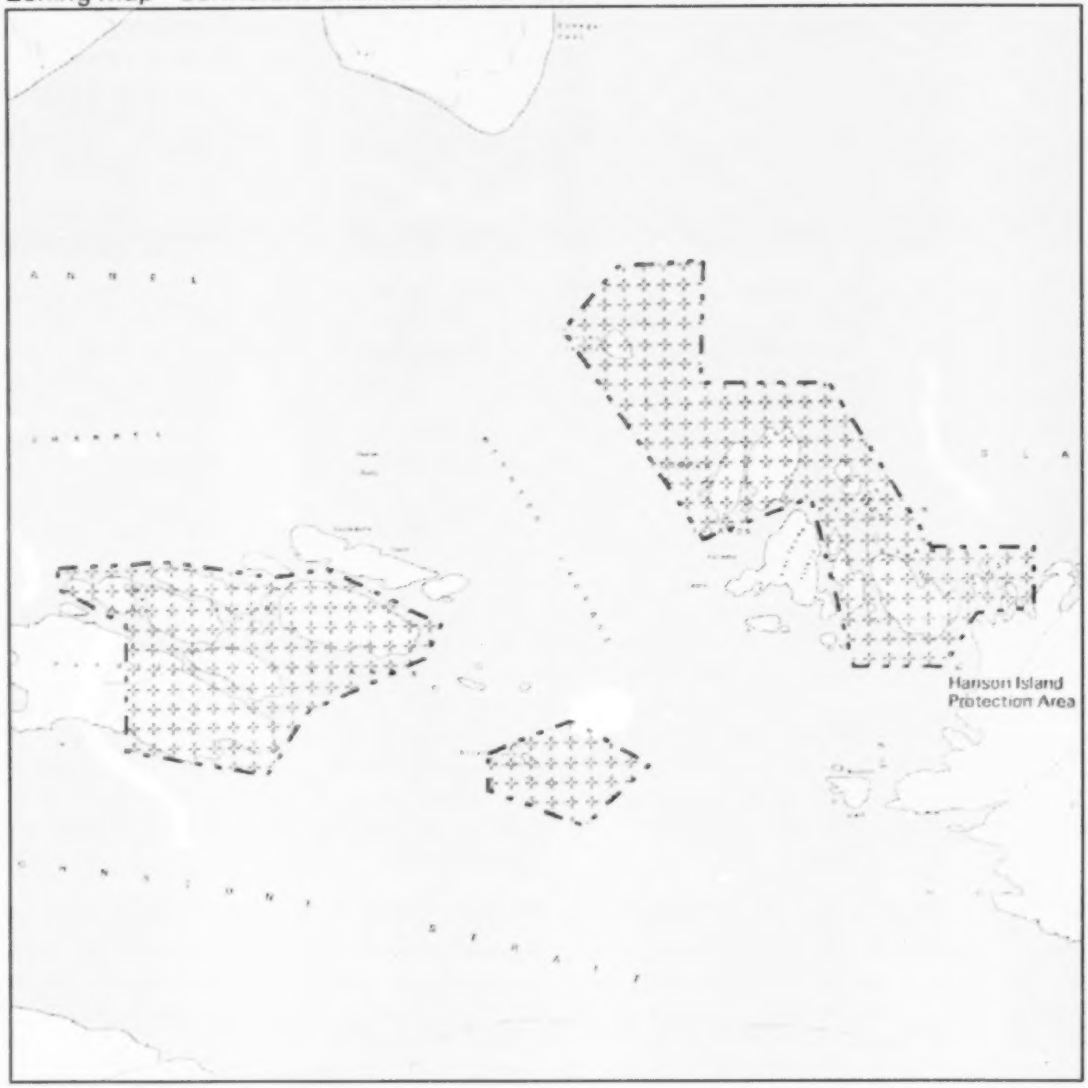
Other Management Considerations

Other Designations	☐	Not Applicable
Relationship to other PAs	☒	Part of a system of protected areas in the Johnstone Strait area and along the Inside Passage
Co-operative Management Arrangements	☐	Not Applicable
Partnerships	☐	Not Applicable
Vulnerability	☒	Marine values are susceptible to oil spills, commercial harvesting in the park, and recreational activities. Small size of the park limits the level of protection offered to the numerous endangered species.
Relationship to other Strategies	☒	North Island Straits Coastal Plan, Marine Protected Areas Strategy

Area: 743.5 hectares (238.3 ha upland; 505.2 ha foreshore)

Date of establishment: September 16, 1992

Zoning Map - Cormorant Channel Marine Park



Projection: Albers Equal Areas
Datum: NAD83

Special Feature
Protected Area Boundary

0 7
km

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